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Could Industry Lend Part-Time Teachers?

The same suggestion for a partial solution to one of our educational problems has come from two sources. A Connecticut committee thought industry might lend scientists to the schools to help meet a drastic shortage of science teachers. In Washington, David Sarnoff proposed the same measure in a talk to the National Industrial Security Association. "I have in mind," Mr. Sarnoff said, "the release—and with full pay for at least a year—of a reasonable number of men and women for teaching assignments in their local schools."

The science teacher shortage is not only an educational problem of course. It has been recognized by such authorities as Allen Dulles of Central Intelligence and Admiral Lewis Strauss of the Atomic Energy Commission as a national problem. We are not giving our youth the technical education they need to make the most out of the opportunities for tomorrow. The Soviet Union is outstripping us in the number of scientific students it turns out annually. Yet most of us realize that atomic energy, automation, and fields like them are the key to the future. We are engaged in a worldwide revolution of technology, and the country that wins will be the one with the best system of education.

Science and technical skills, substituting for direct manpower, give a handful the power to do what thousands did in the not-too-distant past. But as we build machines, we need skilled personnel to handle them. And we cannot even build them if we do not have boys and girls getting the fundamentals necessary to meet the need. This is not a new problem; years and years ago, we could never find enough science teachers for the schools. But the importance of this shortage is growing year by year.

The scientific loan has some drawbacks. Industry is often engaged in projects that are of immediate value to the national security. They want ads tell of how desperately they are seeking skilled help now for missile projects and others of vital need. But there is a balance that must be struck between seed stock and end product. Unless we plant now, we may never harvest the promise that our intelligence tells us we can have.

The plans that Mr. Sarnoff and the Connecticut committee have proposed go beyond the one item of a loan of scientists from the industrial bank. They suggest other ways in which the number of teachers in basic science courses can be increased. All of them deserve study and many ought to be put in action at once. Time is running short.

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